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1	MICHAEL CHEEK ("CHEEK"), FRANKLIN J. LOVE ("LOVE"), and DOES 1-
2	1000 (collectively, "Defendants"), says:
3	I. PARTIES
4	1. Plaintiff is a natural person.
5	2. At all times relevant to this complaint, Plaintiff resided within, the City
6	of Santa Clarita, Los Angeles County, California, and is a citizen of the State of
7	California.
8	3. On information and belief, at all times relevant to this complaint CBB
9	is a for-profit corporation formed in and pursuant to the laws of the State of
10	California.
11	4. CBB maintains its principal business address at 1711 South Mountain
12	Avenue, City of Monrovia, Los Angeles County, California.
13	5. On information and belief, at all times relevant to this complaint,
14	SIGAL is a citizen of, and resided within, the City of Temecula, Riverside County,
15	California.
16	6. On information and belief, at all times relevant to this complaint,
17	CHEEK is a citizen of, and resided within, the City of Arcadia, Los Angeles
18	County, California.
19	7. On information and belief, at all times relevant to this complaint,
20	LOVE is a citizen of, and resided within, the City of West Covina, Los Angeles
21	County, California.
22	8. Defendants, DOES 1-1,000 inclusive, are sued under fictitious names
23	as their true names and capacities are presently unknown to Plaintiff. Plaintiff will
24	amend this complaint by inserting the true names and capacities of these DOE
25	defendants once they are ascertained.
26	9. On information and belief, DOES 1-1,000 inclusive are natural persons
27	and/or business entities all of whom reside or are located within the United States
28	and personally engaged in, created, instituted, and with knowledge that such

in violation of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act ("FDCPA"), 15 U.S.C. § 1692, et seq., and the California Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act ("RFDCPA"), Cal. Civ. Code § 1788, et seq.

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15. The FDCPA regulates the behavior of collection agencies attempting to collect a debt on behalf of another. The United States Congress has found abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors, and has determined that abusive debt collection practices contribute to a number of personal bankruptcies, marital instability, loss of jobs, and invasions of individual privacy. Congress enacted the FDCPA to

- 16. The FDCPA is a strict liability statute, which provides for actual or statutory damages upon the showing of one violation. The Ninth Circuit has held that whether a debt collector's conduct violates the FDCPA should be judged from the standpoint of the "least sophisticated debtor." *Baker v. G.C. Services Corp.*, 677 F.2d 775, 778 (9th Cir. 1982).
- 17. To prohibit harassment and abuses by debt collectors the FDCPA, at 15 U.S.C. § 1692d, provides that a debt collector may not engage in any conduct the natural consequence of which is to harass, oppress, or abuse any person in connection with the collection of a debt and names a non-exhaustive list of certain *per se* violations of harassing and abusive collection conduct. 15 U.S.C. § 1692d(1)-(6). Among the *per se* violations is the placement of telephone calls without meaningful disclosure of the caller's identity, 15 U.S.C. § 1692d(6).
- 18. To prohibit deceptive practices, the FDCPA, at 15 U.S.C. § 1692e, outlaws the use of false, deceptive, and misleading collection letters and names a non-exhaustive list of certain *per se* violations of false and deceptive collection conduct. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(1)-(16). Among these *per se* violations are: using any false representation or deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt or to obtain information concerning a consumer, 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(10); and the failure by debt collectors to disclose in initial oral communications that the debt collector is attempting to collect a debt and that any information obtained will be used for that purpose, and the failure to disclose in subsequent oral communications with consumers that the communication is from a debt collector, 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(11).

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19. The RFDCPA regulates collection agencies and original creditors attempting to collect debts on her own behalf. The California legislature has determined that the banking and credit system and grantors of credit to consumers are dependent upon the collection of just and owing debts and that unfair or deceptive collection practices undermine the public confidence that is essential to the continued functioning of the banking and credit system and sound extensions of credit to consumers. The California legislature has further determined that there is a

need to ensure that debt collectors exercise their responsibility with fairness,

prohibited from engaging in unfair or deceptive acts or practices.

honesty, and due regard for the debtor's rights and that debt collectors must be

- 20. Plaintiff, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, seeks statutory damages, attorney fees, costs, and such other relief, whether equitable or legal in nature, as deemed appropriate by this Court pursuant to the FDCPA and RFDCPA. Plaintiff does not, however, seek actual damages on behalf of the Class..
- 21. This case involves money, property, or other equivalent, due or owing or alleged to be due or owing from natural persons by reason of consumer credit transactions. As such, this action arises out of "consumer debts" and "consumer credit" as those terms are defined by Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.2(f).

IV. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- 22. CBB regularly collects, and attempts to collect, debts incurred, or alleged to have been incurred, for personal, family, or household purposes on behalf of creditors using interstate commerce or the mails.
 - 23. CBB's principal purpose is the collection of such debts.
- 24. On information and belief, SIGAL is a principal owner, officer, director, and/or shareholder of CBB.
- 25. On information and belief, SIGAL attempts to collect debts incurred, or alleged to have been incurred, for personal, family, or household purposes on

- 26. On information and belief, SIGAL personally implemented, and with knowledge such practices were contrary to law, engaged in, acted consistent with, managed, and oversaw all of the illegal policies and procedures complained of herein used by himself, CHEEK, LOVE, other CBB employees, and the DOE Defendants.
- 27. On information and belief, CHEEK is an owner, officer, director, and/or shareholder of CBB.
- 28. On information and belief, CHEEK attempts to collect debts incurred, or alleged to have been incurred, for personal, family, or household purposes on behalf of creditors using the U.S. Mail, telephone, and Internet.
- 29. On information and belief, CHEEK personally implemented, and with knowledge such practices were contrary to law, engaged in, acted consistent with, managed, and oversaw all of the illegal policies and procedures complained of herein used by himself, SIGAL, LOVE, other CBB employees, and the DOE Defendants.
- 30. LOVE is an attorney licensed to practice law in the State of California and he regularly attempts to collect debts incurred, or alleged to have been incurred, for personal, family, or household purposes on behalf of creditors using the U.S. Mail, telephone, and Internet.
- 31. On information and belief, LOVE personally implemented, and with knowledge such practices were contrary to law, engaged in, acted consistent with, managed, and oversaw all of the illegal policies and procedures complained of herein used by himself, SIGAL, CHEEK, other CBB employees, and the DOE Defendants.
- 32. Plaintiff allegedly incurred a financial obligation to Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital for medical services that were for personal, family, or household purposes and defaulted on that obligation ("Debt").

The Exhibits include descriptions of administered prescription

medications, medical procedures, and laboratory and diagnostic tests (collectively,

None of the Exhibits were redacted.

"Protected Health Information" or "PHI").

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- 43. The PHI is sensitive personal information which Plaintiff, reasonable people, and the least sophisticated consumer would consider highly confidential.
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None of the PHI was necessary to be included in Defendants' evidence to prove the claims asserted in the Collection Complaint and, to the extent the

Defendants knew or should have known the PHI was unnecessary to

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- Exhibits may have been necessary, the PHI could have been readily redacted.
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- proving the claims asserted in the Collection Complaint and disclosed confidential,
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- personal information about Plaintiff's medical condition and treatment.
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- Defendants' disclosure of the PHI was an harassing, abusive, unfair, 46. and unconscionable means used in an attempt to collect the Debt.
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- 47. The publication of the PHI into a public forum such as the records of the Superior Court of California has caused Plaintiff emotional distress.

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V. POLICIES AND PRACTICES COMPLAINED OF

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- 48. HIPAA's Privacy Rule sets a national standard for the protection of individuals' medical records and other personal health information.
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- 49. HIPAA's Privacy Rule is found in Part 150 in Title 45 of the Code of
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- Federal Regulations. HIPAA's Privacy Rule prohibits both the use and disclosure of an 50.
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- individual's health information except to the extent the Rule permits or requires use or disclosure. 45 C.F.R. §164.502(a).
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- HIPAA's Privacy Rule to health care providers including, on 51. information and belief, the Assignor and the other assignors who assign medical
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debts to Defendants for collection.

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- 52. As covered entities, the Assignor and those other assignors, cannot
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- lawfully disclose protected health information to Defendants unless Defendants fall
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Defendants must have agreed in writing to certain terms mandated by HIPAA's

within the definition of a "business associate" and, to be a business associate,

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- Privacy Rule including, among others, to maintain the same level of confidentiality

as the assignors.

- 53. Even when HIPAA's Privacy Rule permits the use or disclosure of protected health information, covered entities and their business associates must make reasonable efforts to limit protected health information to the minimum necessary to accomplish the intended purpose of such use or disclosure.
- 54. It has been Defendants' policy and practice to take assignments from hospitals and other health care providers of debts alleged to be owed for health-related services, to sue in CBB's own name, and to publish unredacted records by filing them in the Superior Court of California in actions brought to collect such debts which records unnecessarily contain protected health information concerning the consumer or debtor sued in the collection action.
- 55. Consistent with Defendants' policy and practice, they unnecessarily published Plaintiff's PHI in their attempt to collect the Debt.

VI. CLASS ALLEGATIONS

- 56. This action is brought as a class action. Plaintiff brings this action individually and on behalf of all other persons similarly situated pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
- 57. Subject to discovery and further investigation which may cause Plaintiff to modify the following class definition to be more inclusive or less inclusive, Plaintiff define the "Class" as: Subject to the exclusions in the following paragraph, the Class consists of all persons sued in an action commenced in the Superior Court of California where (a) the complaint named California Business Bureau, Inc. ("CBB") as the plaintiff and alleged a claimed debt assigned to CBB for medical services, and (b) CBB filed documents or records which described either administered prescription medications, medical procedures, laboratory tests, or diagnostic tests.

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behalf CBB attempts to collects debts.

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- 60. Subject to discovery and further investigation which may cause Plaintiff to modify the following definition of the "Class Claims" to be more inclusive or less inclusive, Plaintiff defines the Class Claims as claims arising under the FDCPA and RFDCPA from Defendants' placement into the public records of the Superior Court of California medical records describing administered prescription medications, medical procedures, laboratory tests, or diagnostic tests. Based on discovery and further investigation (including, but not limited to, Defendants' disclosure of class size and net worth), Plaintiff may, in addition to moving for class certification using modified definitions of the Class and Class Claims, seek class certification only as to particular issues except claims by member of any class for actual damages as permitted under Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(c)(4).
- 61. This action has been brought, and may properly be maintained, as a class action pursuant to the provisions of Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure because there is a well-defined community interest in the litigation:
 - (a) **Numerosity:** On information and belief, the Class is so numerous that joinder of all members would be impractical and contain at

- (b) Common Questions Predominate: Common questions of law and fact exist as to all members of the Class and those questions predominate over any questions or issues involving only individual class members. The principal issues are: whether the Defendants' placement of medical records into the public records of the Superior Court of California violates the FDCPA and the RFDCPA.
- (c) **Typicality:** Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the class members. Plaintiff and all members of the Class have claims arising out of Defendants' common uniform course of conduct alleged in this Complaint.
- (d) Adequacy: Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class members insofar as Plaintiff has no interests that are averse to the absent class members. Plaintiff is committed to vigorously litigating this matter. Plaintiff has also retained counsel experienced in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions. Neither Plaintiff nor her counsel have any interests which might cause them not to vigorously pursue the instant class action lawsuit.
- (e) **Superiority:** A class action is superior to the other available means for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy because individual joinder of all members would be impracticable. Class action treatment will permit a large number of similarly situated persons to prosecute their common claims in a single forum efficiently and without unnecessary duplication of effort and expense that individual actions would engender. An important public interest will be served by addressing the matter

limited to, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692d, 1692e, or 1692f.

- 73. Defendants' conduct, together with the reasonable inferences from them, invaded Plaintiff's rights protected under the FDCPA, the invasion of which caused injury-in-fact.
- 74. Based on any one violation of the FDCPA, each Defendant is liable to Plaintiff for damages (including any proven actual damages and additional damages), to the Class for additional damages, and reasonable attorneys' fees (including litigation expenses), and costs, as allowed under 15 U.S.C. § 1692k.

VIII. SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION VIOLATIONS OF THE ROSENTHAL FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT (AGAINST ALL DEFENDANTS)

- 75. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference the allegations in the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint.
- 76. CBB is, at all times relevant to this complaint, engaged in the act and/or practice of "debt collection" as that term is defined by Cal. Civ. Code §1788.2(b).
- 77. CBB is, at all times relevant to this complaint, a "debt collector" as defined by Cal. Civ. Code §1788.2(c).
- 78. SIGAL is, at all times relevant to this complaint, engaged in the act and/or practice of "debt collection" as that term is defined by Cal. Civ. Code §1788.2(b).
- 79. SIGAL is, at all times relevant to this complaint, a "debt collector" as defined by Cal. Civ. Code §1788.2(c).
- 80. CHEEK is, at all times relevant to this complaint, engaged in the act and/or practice of "debt collection" as that term is defined by Cal. Civ. Code §1788.2(b).
- 81. CHEEK is, at all times relevant to this complaint, a "debt collector" as defined by Cal. Civ. Code §1788.2(c).

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- 82. LOVE is, at all times relevant to this complaint, engaged in the act and/or practice of "debt collection" as that term is defined by Cal. Civ. Code \$1788.2(b).
- 83. LOVE is, at all times relevant to this complaint, a "debt collector" as defined by Cal. Civ. Code §1788.2(c).
- 84. Defendants' conduct was in connection with the collection of a "debt" as defined by Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.2(d).
 - 85. The Debt is a "debt" as defined by Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.2(d).
- 86. Plaintiff is, at all times relevant to this complaint, a "person" as that term is defined by Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.2(g).
- 87. Plaintiff is, at all times relevant to this complaint, a "debtor" as that term is defined by Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.2(h).
- 88. Defendants' conduct violated the RFDCPA including, but not limited to, Cal. Civ. Code §§ 1788.10 and 1788.17.
- 89. Based on any one violation of the RFDCPA, each Defendant is liable to Plaintiff for damages (including any proven actual damages and additional damages), to the Class for additional damages, and reasonable attorneys' fees (including litigation expenses), and costs, as allowed under Cal. Civ. Code §§ 1788.17 and 1788.30.

IX. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

90. WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests the Court enter judgment in her favor and in favor of the Class as follows:

A. For the FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION:

(1) An order certifying that the First Cause of Action may be maintained as a class pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and appointing Plaintiff and the undersigned counsel to represent the Class as previously set forth and defined above;

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Pursuant to this Court's Electronic Case Filing Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual 2(f)(4), the electronic filer of this document certifies that the content of the document is acceptable to all persons required to sign the document and authority for filing has been provided by all signatories to this filing. /s/Christopher C. Saldaña Christopher C. Saldaña -17-

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